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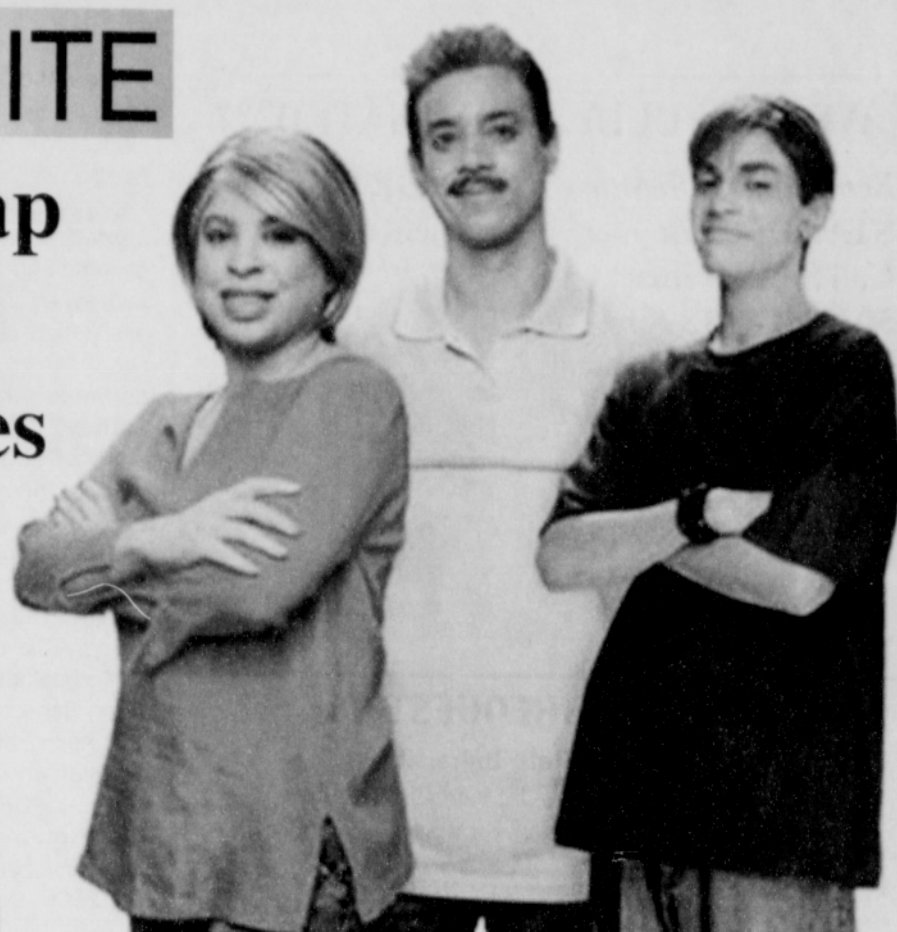


BLACK, WHITE

Families Swap Race in TV Reality Series

"I didn't realize, more than anything, how hard it was going to be for whites and blacks to see the world through each other's eyes."

-Black.White executive producer R.J. Cutler



A white family learns about stereotypes when they take on the characteristics of a black family in the TV reality show 'Black.White.'

Theatrical makeup turns a black family white in the FX reality series 'Black.White.'

FX Network show on Channel 53

(AP) — When writer John Howard Griffin turned his skin from white to dark and traveled the South in 1959 for a firsthand look at the depths of racism, he relied on a simple medical treatment and his wits.

In the 21st century, such a journey requires Hollywood makeup wizardry, the well-honed conventions of both reality TV and documentary filmmaking, and two families, one black, one white, acting as undercover race detectives in Southern California.

As superficially different as FX's "Black.White," Griffin's landmark book "Black Like Me" appear to be, they are brothers under the skin.

"Black.White," airing Wednesdays at 10 p.m. on Cable Channel 53, proceeds with open-minded

seriousness as it leads viewers to a conclusion both obvious and powerful: race counts, for better and worse. Expressions of racism and racial identity change, but that bedrock truth remains.

"I didn't realize, more than anything, how hard it was going to be for whites and blacks to see the world through each other's eyes," said executive producer R.J. Cutler. "I didn't realize how genuinely different an experience it is to be a white American and a black American."

Cutler insisted the six-episode show, which began March 8, doesn't "aspire in any way to say definitive things about race." But the participants and their actions do.

In a Los Angeles-area house, "Black.White" brings together a white family from Santa Monica and a black Atlanta family.

Through artful makeup they swap races, if not perspectives.

Cutler, whose documentary films

and TV series include the acclaimed "The War Room" and "American High," was joined by Ice Cube, the rapper, actor and producer, on the project.

"Don't believe the hype, everything in the world ain't black and white. Everybody ain't a stereotype. Just because I look wrong I'm about to do right," Cube sings in the title song, which also includes his sharp rejection of an oft-cited phrase: "Did you get your race card? Yo, what the hell is a race card?"

His hope for the project was to "expose the subtleties of racism, the layers of racism," the musician told The Associated Press.

The series' timing is notable, with race brought into renewed focus by Katrina and the disproportionate suffering it caused for blacks in New Orleans.

The families in "Black.White" are middle-class, the adults all college-educated. They received a modest fee for their participation, an FX spokesman said.

With special-effects makeup that artfully used wigs, airbrushed skin paint and other elements, the families were transformed to a new ethnicity that could pass muster in varied settings.

Teenager Rose Bloomfield

joined a poetry group with young blacks; Brian Sparks became a bartender at a place drawing white customers. The families also, in the best tradition of reality TV, shared a house in 2005 for the six weeks of production.

The housemates have revealing, sometimes heated clashes over their attitudes on race and the use of volatile epithets. One confrontation pits the black father, adamantly opposed to the "n-word," against his unconcerned teenage son.

On N. MISSISSIPPI AV Avenue Writers, Poets Share Thoughts

The public is invited to hear from three published authors, Tim Barnes, Amanda Deutch and Paula Friedman, who will read from their works at the Bold-Sky Cafe Reading Series, Wednesday, March 29 at 7:30 p.m. at Bold-Sky Café, 3943 N. Mississippi Avenue at Shaver Street.

Barnes is an English professor at Portland Community College. His poems and essays have appeared in Open Spaces, Nebraska Review, Willow Springs, Puerto del Sol, The MacGuffin, Willamette Week and Oregon English, among others.

Deutch writes poetry. Her work has appeared in Watchword, Raven, Artsy Magazine, Hobart and Barrow Street.

Friedman has published poetry and fiction in Out of Line, Jewish Women's Literary Annual, Earth's Daughters, and many other journals. She is a freelance editor, former museum publicist, and peace activist as well as a reunited birthmother and former welfare single mother.

Bold-Sky's monthly reading series is an expression of the restaurant's commitment to pair creative heroics with soul-satisfying food.

O'Jays Scratched

The O'Jays management announced that the March 23 performance by The O'Jays with The Manhattans at the Theater of the Clouds in the Rose Garden in Portland is postponed. Refunds are available.



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